

Italy

East-West Center (Centro Oriente-Occidente)

Prior to 1 Mar. 56

1 March 1956

2 March 1956

Italy, Rome

Ref: DIR-47963

3 Attachments for Wash only
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1. At present, the organization, East-West Center, formerly known as the Catholic-Islamic Center, has no significant membership and, in fact, seems to exist only by virtue of the interest, energy, and financing of its founder and Director-General, Enrico INSABATO, who maintains its offices in his own apartment at 5 Via Cassaria, Rome. INSABATO, a physician and a former colonial officer under Fascism, was born in Bologna in 1879 and first became interested in the Moslem world when he was resident in Egypt in 1902. He describes himself as a publicist and claims to have published in Egypt, in the early 1900s, a journal called Il Corvittio (sic) which was aimed at promoting understanding between Italians and Moslems. INSABATO is assisted in his work by Aldo ARRU who holds the position of Secretary-General of the Center. ARRU is also a physician and is, by reason of birth, a resident of Vatican City. INSABATO asserts that he has no financial backing and claims to bear the expenses of maintaining the Center himself.
2. The stated objective of the Center is to create a solidarity between the peoples of the world's two great religions, Catholicism and Islamism, which will be above political issues and which, as a spiritual force, will eventually stimulate a popular sentiment that will pave the way for more effective collaboration between the governments of the Moslem world and the West. The motive for such collaboration is to enable the Moslem and Western governments to work together towards the defeat of world Communism which today threatens to engulf the world in atheistic materialism. INSABATO is now seeking to broaden the base of his original concept and hopes to expand his objective to include the Christian world rather than limiting it to the Catholic orbit. In attempting to bring together the leaders of Christianity and Islamism he desires to avoid any discussion of a similarity of religious doctrines, recognizing that a comparison based on similarities usually ends by accentuating differences. He feels, however, that the two religions have a common ethic on which a solid front against atheistic Communism can be built.
3. The Center held a conference in Rome on 4 February 1956 in the Sala Sacramenta which is located in the Oratory of St. Phillip Neri of which Father GASPARRI of the Quarantaria Romana is prefect. GASPARRI is reported to favor the initiative of the Center and apparently made the premises of the Oratory

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available for the conference. According to INSABATO, the following personages were among those who attended the 4 February meeting: Ignatius Cardinal TAPPOUNI, Patriarch of the Eastern Rite; Bishop Giovanni BUCKO, Ukrainian Bishop in exile; Constitutional Court Judge AMBROSINI; Father Vincas MINCEVICIUS, President of the Lithuanian Committee; Vassili FEDORONCZUK, Secretary of the Ukrainian Committee; Monsignor SPINA of the Oriental Congregation; Baron DI GIURA, former Viceroy of Albania; a representative of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land; and various un-named diplomatic representatives of the Middle East who were present unofficially.

4. Although certain members of the Church hierarchy apparently follow the activities of the Center with some sympathy and interest, the Vatican Secretariat of State reportedly regards the initiative of the organization with scepticism and reserve. According to Sources, the Secretariat views the proposed solidarity urged by INSABATO as impractical of achievement because of the irrepressible theocratic attitude of Moslems and regards the movement as potentially dangerous to the Faith inasmuch as such collaboration could lead to indifference among Catholics. The Secretariat has reportedly persuaded Father GASPARRI, who had approved of the work of the Center in principle, to withdraw from any active support of the organization.
5. Field Comment: Attached hereto for Headquarters information is a copy of INSABATO's address to the conference on 4 February and a copy of a letter of warm encouragement addressed to INSABATO by Eugene Cardinal TISSERANT. Also attached is a prototype of a journal published by the Center in October 1955. It was apparently the intention of the Center to publish such a journal monthly, but, since no further editions have appeared, it is probably that INSABATO lacks the funds to continue the publication. INSABATO plans to hold another conference on 4 March at which Monsignor Stanislas LOKUATZ, Ecclesiastical Consultant of the Chinese Legation to the Holy See, will give the main address.

cc: Wash (4) with attachments
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Files: E-1
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